(a) whether the Prime Minister was assured that Nepal would not permit any anti-India or terrorist activities from its soil;

(b) whether the question of curbing and preventing anti-India activities from Nepali soil was discussed during his, recent visit to Nepal;

(c) if so, in what precise context the question was considered and what was the outcome thereof; and

(d) the steps taken by the Napali Government so far in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) to (d) During the Prime Minister's visit to Nepal the determination of the two countries was reiterated to work closely and fight the scouragc of terrorism. The Prime Minister directed their Home Secretaries to meet at the earliest to develop and understanding in this regard. They also renewed their commitment not to allow their territory to be used for activities directed against or prejudicial to the security of the other. They also desired that the meeting of the Joint Working Group on Border management be held at the earliest.

Bangladesh India-Sri-Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation Pact

178. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Banladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand! Economic cooperation pact has been signed recently between the four countries, with a view to synergise their resources and technical strcnghth;

(b) if so, whether a number of joint initiatives and ventures, including a joint airline to cater to the religious tourism circuit in the four participating countries, are contemplated under the pact; if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken and being taken in pursuance of the pact?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI):

(a) to (c) Yes Sir, The main purpose of this subregional grouping involving Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand which was formally launched at the Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok on June 6, 1997, is to identify and synergise cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, industry, technology, human resource development, tourism, agriculture, energy, infrastructure and transportation. Specific projects in the identified areas of cooperation will be developed based on studies to Ik conducted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and pacific (ES-CAP) and concepts developed by Member States themselves. Futher steps will be taken after the proposed study by ESCAP has been received. The idea of a joint airline to cater to tourism pilgrimage circuits was put forward by Thailand and is to be studies further at experts level after the Thai concept paper is received.

Staff Strength of Diplomatic Missions in the Erstwhile Soviet Union

179. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the current staff strength of our diplomatic missions based in different locations of the erstwhile Soviet Union;

(b) the broad areas of responsibility assigned to them; and

(c) whether any fresh mutual treaties of frindship arc contemplated to be signed with these countries;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) At Present, India has eight Embassies and three Consulates General in different locations in the erstwhile Soviet Union. The total approved strength of all these Embassies and Consulates covered under the latest sanction of the Ministry of

External Affairs works out to 282 (both India-based and local employees).

(b) All our Missions/Posts abroad, perform a wide range of functions in political, economic, commercial, consular, cultural, information, science & technology and other spheres with a view to promoting and safeguarding, India's overall national interest. This also applies to India's Missions/Posts in the erstwhile Soviet Union.

(c) India has signed a wide range of bilatqral agreements with the countries of the former Soviet Union with a view to further strengthening the overall bilateral tics. Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation have been signed with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Armenia.

New Strategy to be Indian Missions to Lure Foreign Investments

180. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the new strategy to be pursued by our Indian Missions abroad for attracting

foreign investments as Match makers to focus on identified core sectors, as reported in The Hindu dated 9th June, 1997, under the caption "new strategy to lure foreign investment";

(b) the -details of the framework and the module to develop trade and economic linkages; and

(c). in what way the new strategy is likely to be an improvement in the existing framework to secure direct foreign investments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) The experience of only a small percentage of approved foreign investment proposals transforming into actual investments has been attracting the attention of this Ministry also. It has been felt that approved foreign investment proposals need post approval monitoring. Ministry of External Affairs is working towards this objective through our Missions abroad who play a key role in keeping in touch with the foreign investors and facilitating implementation of their approved proposals through various stages. The Missions also act as 'match makers' where possible or necessary.

(b) Our Missions abroad have been taking increasing interest in promoting trade and economic relations. There is special focus on developing trade links with countries in SAARC, South-East Asia, Asia-Pacific, Central Asia, the Gulf, Africa and Latin America. In the field of foreign investments, an "escort service" is proposed to be provided through the apex chambers to major investors.

(c) Due to a liberalized economic environment in India there is ample interest on the part of foreign business houses to invest in India as evidenced by the number of applications and approvals, however, actual investment inflows arc not yet to levels the Government would like to have. This is mainly due to unfamiliarity of procedures on the part of investors. Our effort is to ease this problem so that the foreign investor who is ready to invest docs not shy away and is informed and guided properly till the actual implementation of the project.

Ratification of Chemical Weapons Convention

181. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has recently ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) without Pakistan having done so;

(b) if so, the reasons for India's fretting away too much too soon at CWC;

(c) in what manner India would retain its security options and not surrender its deterrent security options at any stage; and

(d) whether Government would ensure Parliament that there would not be any